



Cape Brett - Bay of Islands Walking Weekend

At last!! I was so excited to actually be going to walk the Cape Track after living in the area for 25 years and was going along with 7 other good friends - 3 of us in our 50/60s and 5 from the generation below. So many years of hearing about others doing the walk and, as I work in the Tourism industry, many years of helping others plan the trip.

So the first challenge is to work out the best way to tackle the route for your group and I reckon we chose well. Drive the 45 minutes from Paihia to Rāwhiti via the car ferry and take a water taxi www.wainot.co.nz from there to Deep Water Cove, leaving car safely with Louise and Bob from the water taxi. First days walk is from Deep Water Cove to Cape Brett and stay overnight at the hut there. The second days walk is the 16 kms from the lighthouse back to Rāwhiti.

All went very smoothly for us - great planning from various members of our team - and we headed off at midday by water taxi with all our gear. The weather for the whole 2 days was spectacular and I guess this makes the whole trip just that bit more wonderful. Bob had local stories to tell on the 20

minute boat ride including reminding us that there were 7 maunga along the ridge with plenty of ups and downs!! Deep Water Cove was so inviting that most of us took a swim before we headed off and Jim reminisced about his last trip there on scout camp 45 years ago when there were still buildings from Zane Greys camp. Refreshed we headed off up hill #1. As it was the hottest part of the day I was pleasantly surprised that there was a reasonable amount of shade, mainly mānuka scrub, until we got up to the first of so many spectacular views and our first glimpse of the seaward end of the peninsula - Rākaumaunamaunga - bright blue sea, bright blue sky and decorations of white surf around the rocky coast line. It was a few more downs, ups, views, streams until we reached the high point on the narrowest part of the walk and more WOWs - views both sides!! Then the start of long descent when we thought how lucky we were that the clay path wasn't wet. We soon forgot that a long down means a long up later when we caught sight of the Lighthouse, Motu Kōkako (Piercy Island) and the large rock between (I now know that this is called Otuwanga Island) and watched a couple of the charter boats head through the Hole in the Rock. More WOWs. Then our overnight hut comes into sight - still way below and an open grassy walk down but time to enjoy views left and right as well as thinking about taking the boots off. Several of us went for a swim at the landing point just below the hut - current wasn't too strong. This area has remains from the lighthouse keeper days - tracks for transporting all the families needed to live and run the lighthouse up from the delivery boats.

[Cape Brett History](#)



The hut is great and our group settled into one section with 9 beds - there are two other areas, one with 13 beds / bunks and the other 2 beds. The hut was full (23 people) but plenty of room in the kitchen dining area and the facilities lived up well to our expectations. We heated up ready cooked mince in the provided pots and boiled water for drinks but were self sufficient with what we had brought with us for the rest of our meals. We were lucky to have 3 strong 20s males to carry the majority of the weight. The hut has plenty of books about the days when it was one of three homes for the lighthouse keepers and families - what an interesting life they lead. As we had such glorious weather the inside of the hut was less important - sunset was at about 7.45 and we enjoyed this from a ridge a few minutes from the hut - such spectacular colours. Not long after we watched an almost full moon rising over the water in the East - very special. Bed called soon after and I was happy with my sleep sheet and thin blanket and imagine this would be plenty most of summer. It was also quieter on the plastic mattresses than a sleeping bag and easier to cover my head when 'that one mosquito' started flying around.

We were pleased that we picked the ideal day - just before the clocks went back for autumn meaning sunrise was not too early - 7.30am. We enjoyed the walk over to the eastern side to soak up wonderful pre sunrise colours and textures and then the dawn colours. We will have great memories of our stay in a very special place.

An hour or so later it was on again with the boots and slightly lighter packs for our day up and down the maunga (mountains) beginning with the one we knew - the zig zag path from the hut to the lighthouse and trig point above. The ups and downs heading back along the peninsula towards Rawhiti began with views out to the open sea and down as far as the Poor Knights

Islands, beautiful coastline, beaches and forest. Mānuka and kānuka scrub turned into more varied bush and the odd grove with nīkau palms. Lots of kowhai too that must look so pretty later in the year and reminded me of the last time I had walked to Whangamumu when kowhai were in spectacular flower.

The lack of flowers and berries this time of year must be the reason for very few birds in the bush apart from fantails and the odd tui and black robin. Further down the track the views were more back toward the Bay of Islands but ever changing angles meant varied views of the closest islands and the distant mainland but a chance for a quick wave back home. As the day progressed the odd less steep part gave a chance for chatting with each other and as we watched the kilometre markers progress felt justified in taking a few breaks to top up energy levels and just enjoy being where we were. After about 4.5 hours we were gradually starting to think - I don't want to go down again if it means another up but got to the predator fence which we reckoned was pretty close to the biggest 'up' to Pukehuia and more views. The last hour is pretty much down hill - just remember this if you are thinking of doing the track the reverse way, ending up right at the lovely sandy Oke Bay and what a wonderful way to complete the



walk with welcome swim in such clear and not too cold water. It is then just a short walk to pick cars up and head home. [https://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap/nz12187/Motukokako-Island-\(Piercy-Island\)/](https://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap/nz12187/Motukokako-Island-(Piercy-Island)/)

I loved the walk - being out in the open, the challenge of a really good walk, an amazingly beautiful part of NZ, great company, the experience of Cape Brett overnight and such good weather.

This walk actually has actually combined two walks on the Bay of Islands Walking Weekend combined in it. The overnight Cape Brett Walk - which is a drop off and pick up from Deep Water Cover where you stay out at Cape Brett, and the Pukehuia and Whangamumu Whaling Walk where you start at Rawhiti and climb Pukehuia and make your way to Whangamumu. Spectacular views and scenery on these very untouched walks. Visit www.boiwalkingweekend.co.nz for details